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ABSTRACT

This special issue of "Kansas English" focuses on composition, culture, and citizenship. Included in this issue are the following articles: "Composing: When Artifice Is a Real Help" by Tom Hemmens and Micheal Roberts, which discusses the composing process and suggests various artifices, such as structure charts and sketch outlines, as a means of helping students write; "The Composing Process: A Sequence" by John Bushman and Sandra Jones, which suggest several writing sequences, including experimental writing, focused writing, and structured writing; "In Praise of Festivals" by Sister Marie Brinkman; "The English Teacher as Concerned Citizen" by Oscar Haugh and Melvin Riggs, which discusses recent laws which affect English teachers; and "From a Reading Desk" by Marcia Smith, which reviews several recent books. (TS)

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Composing: When Artifice Is A REAL Help

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Structuring a process of inquiry is our job in the classroom. We spend night hours conjuring artifices that will involve our students in problem solving and set the process in motion. A blank page with the heading "List what you know about rockets" is a useful artifice. A chart with three columns inviting the student to fill in the space is another useful artifice. A sketch outline is another. The forgotten and unlamented five-paragraph theme is another artifice, useful too in its limiting way. Whatever the artifice, however elaborate or simple its cunning, it is valuable, though, only if it can ease the student's way through a process of inquiry and composing and eventually into communication.

The process itself may begin with virtually any problem or question but it is important to distinguish between questions which can be answered with facts and questions which require interpretation or combination of facts. Gathering the information—the evidence—is the first and necessary step. From this collection of facts and detail, a writer may begin to generalize, to think through, combine, and sort his material until he interprets or projects the facts into his own answer. This process is much the same, from elementary learning situations through academic inquiry.

A scholar-critic, for instance, may set out on a search for the actual shape, dimensions and furnishings of the original Provincetown Playhouse in which O'Neill produced some of his earliest plays. As a scholar he will collect blueprints, accounts in diaries and reviews, photographs—everything he can unearth to reconstruct the actual playhouse. He might consider his inquiry ended with a descriptive essay or a scale model reproduction. But as a critic he may take the evidence and raise a question of interpretation: how did the shape and size of the Provincetown Playhouse affect O'Neill as he worked over his scripts for production? There is no exact answer to the question. Comparing what he knows about the playhouse with his reading of the scripts and production information, he will hypothesize, sort, reject, connect, conclude. When he writes up his conclusions, he will include some of the sorting and rejecting and connecting so that his readers will share the fascinating workings of a mind at play among pieces of evidence. The process is fully as significant as the product.

With the student in our classroom, however, the process becomes far and away more significant than the end product. The student's conclusions, his projections from his evidence, may not add much to the sum of human knowledge. (Someone may argue that the shaping of the early O'Neill plays is a questionable addition, for that matter.) What is significant is the student's growing confidence and ease as he finds his own way of asking questions and composing answers. As teachers we contrive strategy and artifice to get the student started in this process.

So that we can demonstrate one way of starting a process of inquiry and composing, consider that a class has just read a short selection from a high school anthology, *Points of View*, edited by James Moffett and Kenneth McElheny (A Mentor Book,

Tom Hemmens, Director of Freshman Composition at Pittsburg and a former president of KATE, collaborates here with colleague Micheal Roberts in presenting their program at the Wichita KATE Round Tables, 1974.

1966). The selection, "This Is My Living Room," by Tom Mcaffee. We listen to a redneck Southerner muse about education, women, race, ethics, family, and the American Way, as he tells a series of interrelated incidents. He begins with his living room, "It ain't big but big enough for me and my family—my wife Rosie setting over there reading recipes in the Birmingham *News* and my two girls Ellen Jean and Martha Kay watching the TV. I am setting here holding *Life* magazine in my lap. I get *Life*, the *News*, and *Christian Living*." He goes on to tell us how he keeps his wife in line while seeing another woman in town, how he shoots a black man who didn't pay the charge at his store, how he keeps his two girls from dating because he knows "what the boys will do, what they want to get out of a girl." At the end of the evening he orders the girls to turn off the TV and get to bed, then stands in front of his wife and tells her, "Go in yonder and get in bed," and tells us, "She starts to cry and that's all right. It wouldn't be a bit like her if she didn't."

To start the student on his process of inquiry, we hand him a blank sheet of paper with the heading, "List below all the specific actions and words in the story that describe the narrator." The process also can be carried forward by group discussion rather than by an individual student; the teacher or a volunteer student can begin to make a list on the board or on the overhead projector, as the class supplies the details. During this elementary stage, many students jump to generalizations rather than stick to specific detail. Rather than note the narrator's words about his mistress, they will say he is "a chauvinist" or an "s.o.b." This movement from specific to general is such an ordinary part of our thinking that the two may seem too closely related to be separated. But it is useful, particularly at this point, to ask students to collect and examine as much specific evidence as they can before formulating conclusions.

This first stage of writing down the details gives the student something visual and concrete to start with, more useful, perhaps, than the words of an evaporated class discussion. We saw the same process yesterday in the work of a master teacher. We were watching Kenneth Koch, the poet, stimulate writing from fifth-graders in his film for the National Endowment of Arts, "Wishes, Lies, and Dreams." Koch's objective was to get the children started writing a "comparison" about rivers. When he walked into the class, he picked up a geography book from the desk of a front-row youngster and asked what he was studying in geography. "Africa" sent Koch to the board, writing down the names of the rivers the students fed to him, including "the Mongo," which he accepted because it should be the name of a river if it isn't. Then he asked them to supply names of American rivers, and listed them in a column beside the African rivers. The simple artifice of a list, a visual presentation, began the children's composing process on a foundation of specificity.

After the students have piled up specific details to describe the narrator of "This Is My Living Room," we pass out the following blank chart to each student. If the class is working as a unit, the chart goes on the board or on the overhead.

Thesis:

Chauvinist				
Girls clean up Wife should cry				

In each column, the student writes the details that illustrate one generalized characteristic of the narrator. The generalization goes in the box at the top. From the original list, we select these details: Rosie, his wife, is reading recipes, she is afraid to shoot guns, and she cries all the time, as expected; his girls are good to dust and sweep and keep things clean. When the student places his meaning on these details, they can add up to the generalization that the narrator is a chauvinist. Students have not always seen the same generalizations in a set of details. For instance, students have processed details which show the racial bigotry of the narrator and called him a "redneck," while other students claimed he was merely protecting his property. The class argued about what each student meant by "redneck." It was a lively discussion.

Next we look at the word "thesis" at the top of the sheet. Asked what they want to say about the narrator in one sentence, someone in the class has always come up with a summary thesis like, "The narrator is bigoted, chauvinistic, violent, and distrustful of everyone." It is a beginning. It may be enough to shape a structured, detailed paper. But we suggest that each student go farther and find an attitude toward his summary that shows what he thinks about it. We ask, "Do you like this guy? How would you handle him? Would you like him living next door?" After many trials, they may come up with, "I wouldn't feel safe living next door to a man who is as violent and bigoted as the narrator." Or they may find a thesis that projects the idea beyond the story, "People like the narrator are dangerous." These conclusions may not sound very important to an O'Neill scholar, but they can focus a short paper, presenting a point of view.

Another device that sometimes helps students plan a paper more effectively is a sketch outline, whether on the board or on a separate sheet. Working from the information on the chart, they fill in an outline something like this:

Thesis: People like the narrator have no place in life today.

Point 1. He is a chauvinist
—girls should clean up
—women always cry

Point 2.
—details
—details

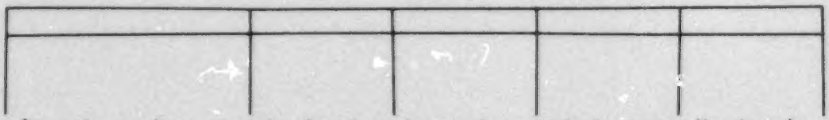
A sketch outline may help a student to decide paragraph division, and it keeps focus on the main idea. Some students, though, find the outline a nuisance and work well directly from their charts.

The student could write up what he has planned, but we seldom go ahead with this paper. The steps we have gone through with "This Is My Living Room" require work and time, and the students' interest in the story is not inexhaustible. For a paper, we turn, instead, to the students' own experience and observation. To start the process, we hand the student a sheet of paper with the heading, "Think of a person you know well but not intimately whom you have observed closely. List as many specific details as you can that tell what he is like—actions, words he uses habitually, gestures, places where he hangs out, and any other detail you can think of." This step is more important here than it was when the student was collecting details about the narrator of "This Is My Living Room." The student is on his own now, where before he was working with the group and the teacher, and the details in this case must be dredged from his memory rather than the page of a story. The student must be given time to

collect enough details to fill the whole page. The quality of the composition is closely related to the number and vividness of the details the student finds at this point. It can be the difference between a paper that begins, "My friend is really a great person to know," and RUTH IS A BITCH AND SHE GIVES DAVID EVERYTHING HE WANTS. The second beginning is a piece of graffitti that Ruth remembered as she was collecting details, and the rest of the paper explains how she found the vile person who was putting her name on toilet walls and later became a close friend.

Once the student has remembered and listed all the details he can, we hand him a sheet with three or four columns arranged so that details may be listed to support generalizations in each column.

Thesis:



As before, the student sorts the details and puts them with the generalization they support. And, as before, the generalization can be simply combined in a summary thesis: "John is a fun loving guy who likes to drink and have a good time." When we talk to each student as he works toward his thesis, we encourage him to adopt a position or an attitude toward the person he is describing. With some work, the summary thesis may turn into "John is a fun loving guy who likes to drink and have a good time and I admire him," but we try to push him to be more precise. We ask whether or not his detail, in fact, supports his generalization. Students can and do insist that their father's refusal to buy them a new Firebird is evidence of unreasonableness. Looking back over his chart, the student may discover that his details do not show so much that "John is fun loving" as they do that John's fun is childish and usually gets him in trouble with his parents. And the writer admires John less than he did. As a final planning step before beginning to write, the student can transfer the information from his chart onto a sketch outline, which gives him another way of seeing the shape of his paper.

For an alternative writing assignment, we introduce the method of comparison/contrast, picking up from the earlier discussion of "This Is My Living Room." On the chart below, students fill in the generalizations about the narrator and some of the supporting details. In the opposing column, they think of a person they know who shares some of these characteristics. It is a rare student who lacks an experience with unreasonable, bigoted, violent adults. The actual person the student is thinking about will not, of course, be a clone of the narrator in the story, but he will have some significant likenesses, and some differences.

Thesis:

Narrator	Someone I Know
1. chauvinistic —wife crying —girls to clean up	1.
2.	2.

Comparing these two people, the fictional and the real, the student must find something to say about them. "They are alike in some ways and different in others" is not an answer. We can ask, "What is it about both men that you particularly dislike? Why? Is there some special quality in the real person that saves him from becoming the menace that we decided the fictional character might become?" We prod, and the student doodles, until finally he shapes a sketch outline that makes his point through comparison/contrast:

Thesis: My Uncle John has many of the dangerous tendencies of the narrator in "This Is My Living Room," but he is all talk and no action.

1. Both are violent
   —the narrator kills
   —Uncle John threatens but always backs down
   —the incident over the fence
2. Both are bigots
   —the narrator humiliates Negroes
   —Uncle John talks behind their back. He even entertained a Negro in his house—always changes to smiling when he meets a Negro face to face.

This outline, though incomplete, suggests the direction the student's thinking is going, and can shape a paper.

Another possibility is to present the chart below to the student, asking him to fill in all the details he can think of about two different people. He chooses two people who are comparable in a basic way, who have a common ground such as fatherhood, business, or teaching.

My Dad	Joe's Dad

After the chart is filled in, the student sorts, organizes, and finds similarities that will hold for both men, and differences that may begin to develop into a thesis. The student might arrive at generalizations about fatherhood as he observes these two dads, or he might learn more about one dad by comparing him with the other: "Sometimes I think my dad is pretty hard to get along with, but by comparison with Joe's dad, mine isn't strict at all."

As still another writing assignment, with different charts, different props, we use "This Is My Living Room" to start the students composing a thematic narrative. In one section of his ramblings, the narrator tells us about the time one of the Negroes refused to pay for a loaf of bread. The man denied that he had ever charged the loaf in the first place. The narrator cursed him and humiliated him in the store. That night the narrator discovered the man in his backyard and shot him in the face, justifying the action by discovering a knife in the dead man's hand. The structure of this incident is simply charted, with the students help. It begins like this:

Thesis: I am protecting the community from the dangerous, shiftless, cheating lowlife that doesn't belong here.

Background	Main Action	Narrrator's Reflection
the bread credit humiliation	sound in yard shooting	deserved it no good

Making the chart, the students can discuss how the narrator chooses words and details to justify his pious, noble action (or to support his thesis).

Given a blank chart like the one above, the students can recall an incident they are not particularly proud of and plan to write about it within the same structure —details to set up the background, a detailed narrative of the action, and a reflection of the incident from the perspective of then and now. The artifice of the structure chart helps students sort out the experience.

All of these artifices—the structure charts, the sketch outlines—may bog the student and the teacher down in mechanical, uninspired composing if we force him to fill out the device as it were important in itself. In practice, some students skip steps and combine others. But the devices give each student a chance to find his own way through a composing process. They give us a chance to make the classroom a laboratory in which we move around from student to student helping at critical points in their composing, usually when they are trying to formulate a thesis or shape an outline. Even those students with nothing to write about can find something if they work with the charts long enough.

It does take a long time, and it is only one of several ways to provoke student writing, but the process is as significant and as compelling as the product. It is what we mean when we say we "teach" composition, and feel good about it.

"Stating the Assignment"

Should I state the assignment like a mother
Reminding her son to change his sweatshirt?
"Make sure that you read 'The Death of the Hired Man!'"
Or like a promotion agent
Using the "try it; you'll like it" push?
"Read Frost; he has something for all of you!"

Why?

When the moon diffuses with the cadence
And you ponder the lines
Of the face of a tired man,
The argument for his worth by a woman,
Maybe . . .
The moon won't seem the same.

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The Composing Process: A Sequence

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School writing programs often lack a most important characteristic: a sequence. Too often the writing activities at the beginning of the program are the same as those at the end. Students are asked to perform the same task—write a well-developed, structurally sound, clearly and concisely expressed theme—at both ends of the semester or year. The major difficulty with this approach is that it emphasizes a product and students have little opportunity to participate in the *process* of writing and, thus, have little opportunity for success.

Students can experience the joy of and success in writing if they move through a writing sequence. They begin by experimenting with words and playing with language patterns as they attempt to be more picturesque and fresh in their writing. They experiment with ideas as well. All of this enables the students to be more at ease with their language before they attempt to focus their ideas and structure their writing. Students are encouraged to view writing as an on-going process with steps along the way which provide concentration on specific writing skills. Products are considered only when the writing has been revised and when the writer feels it is ready for evaluation.

PRE-WRITING

Students may have a negative attitude, sometimes a fear, toward writing; therefore, to help students break down these writing inhibitions, we suggest a pre-writing program. The important focus in pre-writing is that students are encouraged to experiment with their language making it fresh, alive, and workable to express their ideas. They work with abstractions, cliches, twisted phrases, and graffiti boards. Students look for ways others have effectively used language, too. They collect examples from bill boards; bumper stickers; signs; newspaper, magazine, and television advertisements; and comic strips.

The following are examples of pre-writing from our classes:

Phrases with a twist

Sailboats inhaling the wind.
A closed mouth gathers no foot.
Life is just a bowl of pits.

Abstractions

Remorse: house-broken puppy that regresses.
Exhaustion: overchewing your bubble gum.

Bumper Stickers

I brake for garage sales
Milk: The Udder Uncola

Book Titles

End of Week by Fry Day
House of Pancakes by Sir Rupp
Story of St. Paul by Minnie Appolis

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EXPERIMENTAL WRITING

Many people find it much easier to express their thoughts in speech rather than in writing. Perhaps this feeling of inadequacy in writing has come about as the result of the constant critical evaluation with little positive reinforcement that is received in school. These people see proof of their ability to communicate orally when those who listen to them appear to understand. From the time children first begin to speak they experiment with the sounds they hear until they stumble on to the right combination to make themsevles understood. Most parents react excitedly, praising children and encouraging them to repeat that success. Other noises, jabbering, and nonsense sounds are simply labeled "baby talk"; not necessarily discouraged, yet more quickly forgotten as children build on those sounds which successfully communicate for them. Therefore, children learn to speak in an atmosphere of encouraged experimentation which leads to successful building of meaningful language through positive reinforcement. The same procedure, then, can be used to develop the writing process.

After exploring the various word combinations and sounds in the pre-writing stage, students need an opportunity to "experiment" with this language to develop successful ways to communicate their ideas through writing, just as they did when developing their oral communication. They should be allowed to build on their successes, gradually leaving behind the awkward broken phrases which parallel their vocal "baby talk." Those around them must encourage their written successes through positive reinforcement just as their parents once did.

This stage in the writing program is termed Experimental Writing. With a background of "language play" afforded them in the pre-writing stage, students now have the opportunity to experiment with ways of expressing ideas, with word combinations, and with images. They must be allowed to write as much as they want, as freely as they want, about what they want, without fear of failure. They must know that they will not be criticized or "graded down" for their attempts, but that their successes will be rewarded along the way.

Some might consider the Experimental Writing phase a rough draft as opposed to future finished products. Just as a journalist sketches an outline of ideas before submitting the final article, or as a politician creates several drafts before settling on the best prepared speech, students must see the need to write frequently before they can expect to compose the best expression of their ideas. And more importantly, they must feel confident that their experimentations, their outlines, their rough drafts, will not be judged as finished products, but that they will be appreciated as the development of products to come.

Experimental writing can begin, then, with a simple exercise in putting thought into the form of words which are written on paper. A good way to start this process is to give students the opportunity to write whatever comes into their minds for a period of time. For example, they may begin by writing "I don't know what to write," several times since most students begin by either drawing a blank or searching their minds for ideas. Eventually, something comes to mind leading from a blank, to how they feel under pressure, to a test they have next hour, to the boring gray walls of a classroom, or to how colors affect them. After several periods of writing freely about whatever they wish, the flow of thought to paper becomes easier, especially since they are not being judged or graded on what they write.

In addition to this free timed writing, stimuli can be included to create an atmosphere conducive to writing. Music, pictures, and films are excellent sources. Another activity encourages the use of imagery as students write thoughts on childhood. Students are free to skip to different phases of childhood. They may desire to write about an experience or they may simply wish to list words or phrases they associate with this period of their lives. Experimental writing may also develop in response to a story or a discussion as long as the students are not restricted by form and may still experiment with the written expressions of their ideas.

Students need an audience for their writing. Just as people find limited growth in discussions with themselves, writers need feedback from an audience of readers. In this program the audience is composed of students' peers. They share their writings with each other by reading and discussing their papers in small groups. Responses to the writing at this stage must deal only with successes in the papers. Students should look for words or phrases that sound good together, vivid images, effective descriptive words, and lively verbs. After receiving this response, students are more likely to remember what was successful and to forget about the other items that received no response as they begin another piece of writing. Therefore, through positive reinforcement, students learn what is effective in their writing and build on it.

FOCUSED WRITING

Students move now from the "random rehearsal" (Ken Macrorie, *Writing To Be Read*, Hayden Book Co., New York, 1968) of Experimental Writing to the selection, organization, and presentation of a particular idea in Focused Writing. The fresh, honest style of writing emphasized in Experimental Writing continues as students are encouraged to write with excitement, to experiment with their language, and to develop their authentic voice, but to do it while focusing on a specific idea they wish to express.

As in other parts of the writing program, sharing and criticizing play an important role. Positive comments about the quality of writing from peers in small groups are continued throughout Focused Writing. However, after a few writing experiences, students begin to receive negative comments. Because students feel comfortable about their writing and their sharing in groups, suggestions to change their writing are now accepted more easily. The successes in writing that students have already attained through positive reinforcement make the suggested changes even more meaningful.

Brainstorming is one of the most beneficial activities to help students in this focusing process. Through brainstorming, students are able to select and organize their ideas. For example, after brainstorming on the subject of "rain" for 5-7 minutes, our students came up with 50-55 different points which they could organize around 3 general areas: growth, storms, and clothing. Students used this method to help them focus their thoughts and feelings in a story or a simple narrative about "rain."

It is important to note that process still has top priority. Students are encouraged to express their feelings and ideas in a way that is meaningful to them. Emphasis is given to ideas and expression, not to structure, grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc. Only after students have received feedback from their readers, reworked their writing in light of this feedback, and, in general, lived with their writing for some time, are they concerned with the final editing processes. That is not to say that students do not talk in groups about structural problems when they are sharing and criticizing. They do! These concerns, then, become most important not in the initial writing

experience but in the revision that follows.

Many activities have helped our students in the focusing process. Here are but a few of those activities:

Using a snapshot of their childhood, students write about an incident that they remember occurring prior to age 10. If a snapshot is not available, students may simply use their memory of this childhood experience. Because the idea for writing is quite personal, students give honest interpretation of specific incidents. They are encouraged to share any lumps and bruises along with the bright spots.

Students respond to pictures with two or more people depicted. The writers tell about the characters: what they were doing before the picture was taken, how they got where they are, what they are doing, what they are saying, feeling, what kind of lives they live. Students often include these concerns and thoughts in a creative story. In addition to detail and point of view, students have experience in writing dialogue.

Dreams provide a source for many writing activities. After spending some time on dreams and how to remember them, students pick one and write about it. It is more effective if students are encouraged not to mention in the writing that they are describing dreams. Rather, they just tell them as stories.

A dialogue with hats stimulates much excitement and interest in writing. All that are needed are hats and a hat rack! The first writing is a narrative in which students tell the origin and description of their hats, from the hat's point of view, of course! The hat might include what it looks like, its texture, size, color, firmness, shape, place of birth, schooling, parents, siblings, hobbies, religious preference, and medical history. A second writing activity occurs after hats have been placed on the rack. Each hat starts a conversation with the hat next to it. Hats might discuss a topic of general interest to hats: their relative position on the rack, their likes and dislikes, and their concerns and frustrations.

An interesting activity which emphasizes point of view involves the retelling of a story. This activity helps students to see that different situations may appear completely different when viewed by different people. To begin, students choose an inanimate object which writes a story on "How I Changed Jack's (the object's owner) Life." Students need to realize that this event need not be earthshaking. Simple choices may be most effective: a book that changed their philosophy, a record which inspired them to some action, or a car which almost caused them to have an accident. As a follow up, students might choose a well-known story and retell it from a different point of view, e.g., a section from *Call of the Wild*—retold by a different person or by a different dog in the pack.

As we have suggested, earlier, after each writing experience, students share their writing in small groups. During this time students relate positive and negative criticisms about the quality of the writing. Students' talk includes, but is not limited to, the following: descriptions, word choices, images, sentence variety and length, freshness and clarity of expression, descriptive adjectives, and explosive verbs. At this stage of the writing, students do not consider the writing as a "completed paper," or a

finished product; but a piece of writing that has many good points as well as some that need revision. The group criticizes the writing as it appears in that stage knowing that it will be revised as it moves through the process to an eventual product.

REVISION

With the confidence of success and the challenge of constructive criticism, students are prepared to concentrate on the findings of a product. Prior to this stage of the composing process, all writing has been done in preparation for a polished complete piece of writing. Now students are ready to select and to revise a piece of writing from their folders.

It is important to select a paper from past writing for which students have received both positive and negative criticism. This way they are armed with their strengths as well as possibilities for improvement which they may choose to use or reject. It is not necessarily wise for students to completely accept all negative criticism as best. If they do, they may simply be writing someone else's ideas. It will become something which is not theirs and they will lose interest in the project. On the other hand, students should not totally disregard changes that have been suggested. Therefore, students must consider suggested changes carefully. Will this change still convey the original idea? Will it, in their opinion, strengthen or weaken the image? Is it more clear, more vivid or could it work better somewhere else in the paper? After a careful analysis, students can make honest and justified decisions on how to use the criticism they have received. Students must retain confidence in their own ability to create.

In addition to responses from the group, students should consider how they have used elements of good writing which have been discussed in class. They check for repetitions; they analyze beginnings and endings; they tighten and strengthen their writing by removing unnecessary words. Once students have completed the revision process to their satisfaction, then and only then, should their writing be evaluated as a finished product.

STRUCTURED WRITING

To fail to include some structured forms of writing in this program would be unfair. It should be noted, however, that adherence to a specific form of writing—the five-paragraph essay, the poetic form, the research paper, the critical essay, etc.—has no place in the natural process of composition prior to the revision stage. Each of these forms requires confidence, discipline, and sophistication that are developed gradually, with practice. They are attained after a comfortably paced building process.

While it may be beneficial to write various literary forms—comparison and contrast, extended definition, analogy, etc.—it seems to us that very few high school students should spend much time with these forms since they call for rather sophisticated writing. Students may not need to handle this writing until they are in university programs. Perhaps, the focus should be on exposing the forms for awareness rather than mastery of them.

Research papers, general "themes," and the essay forms are often included in schools because the educational system requires these forms of its students. Exposure to these structures is beneficial for academia but probably has little other use; however, other structured writing such as formal letters, reports, reviews, letters to the editor, speeches, news articles, and even sermons emphasize the same important logical thinking processes but are much more relevant to the students' lives. Therefore, they may be more useful to students when they finish their formal education.

The essential point to remember is that in any form of writing, success is achieved through a careful but creative expression of an idea. Effective writing is practiced and developed, it is rarely instinctive. Even a letter to the editor can be ineffective, and therefore not read, if it does not incorporate elements of good writing. Structured writing should be attempted only after students mature in the composing process.

THE ROLE OF GRAMMAR

Arguments about the usefulness of grammar study and its relationship to writing have been going on for years and it is not the intent of this paper to add any new information to that discussion. However, it would seem appropriate to reflect upon what researchers say about the teaching of grammar and its effect on writing.

In 1963, Richard Braddock and others conducted a review of research on written composition and concluded that "the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible, or because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing." (*Research and Written Composition*, Urbana, Ill.: NCTE, 1963, p. 37-38.) Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner reiterated Braddock's conclusion: "In general the experimental evidence revealed a discouraging lack of relationship between grammatical knowledge and the better utilization of expressional skills." (*Linguistics: A Revolution in Teaching*, New York: Dell, 1966, p. 65.)

Since these publications, some research seems to suggest the opposite point of view. The Bateman-Zidonis (NCTE, 1964) and Mellon (NCTE, 1969) studies seemingly given credence to the teaching of Transformation-Generative grammar as a means to better writing. However, the Frank O'Hare study—*Sentence Combining: Improving Student Writing without Formal Grammar Instruction* (NCTE, 1973)—suggests that the change in writing behavior in his study as well as in the Bateman-Zidonis and Mellon studies was due to the sentence combining approach and *not* to the knowledge of Transformational grammar.

While the O'Hare study does not provide conclusive proof against the teaching of grammar, it does suggest great promise in teaching structural variation with grammatical knowledge. This data coupled with the research which does not support grammar teaching as an aid to writing ought to persuade teachers to consider very carefully the time spent and the results attained in teaching formal English grammar as an aid to writing.

Teachers need to be aware of the difference between teaching grammar and hoping for some transfer to writing *and* teaching writing and using structural strategies that help students make their writing more effective through the revision process. The former is grammar oriented and has, in our opinion, little, if any, positive impact on students' writing. The latter emphasizes writing and uses discussion of structural variations, usage items, and general language conventions to help each individual student evaluate his/her writing behavior.

What we have suggested emphasizes important considerations for any writing program: experimentation with language, peer evaluation, positive reinforcement, revision, and perhaps most of all, a writing sequence. Our experience tells us that students who participate in this program want to write; they enjoy writing and sharing; and most importantly, they write well!

In Praise of Festivals

SISTER MARIE BRINKMAN
Saint Mary College
Leavenworth, Kansas

From time unrecorded, unremembered, human beings have made their festivals and celebrations. So the myths tell us. In our own personal time, we celebrate birthdays, holidays, holydays, anniversaries, feastdays. When we get to high school, it's time for rallies and homecomings. But only recently, have students, with their teachers, rallied to beauty.

Perhaps we should come together more often to celebrate beauty. Put that way, it seems a rather solemn affair. Put another way, it's the jolliest thing we could do, for art is to make us happy.

But art is not the ordinary thing we go to for our happiness. It costs too much—not in dollars and cents, for our galleries and museums and even some books are free. But in time and energy and effort: it's almost like work—and very much like study—to try to like fine arts.

Besides, who wants it—when we've got each other? People make people happy; so who needs art? I remember a line from an American writer who's become pretty well respected these days—because he was an individualist. Henry David Thoreau said, in an essay on solitude, "We meet at very short intervals, not having had time to acquire any new value for each other."

That's simply to suggest that sometimes when we take ourselves apart from the crowd, and away from the ordinary routine, we get a chance to meet beauty—if we have learned where she lives.

Once we get it together—this business of beauty, we just might have it made. I remember, from this past winter, a beautiful face, one of the loveliest I've ever seen; she's called Barbara, and she sings. She appeared one Thursday night on the Flip Wilson show.

Then there was tiny Shanta—two years old, I think—caught fresh from a nap one afternoon three days ago. Her miniature black face shone soft and smiling out from her white snowsuit, like a star, as she started out to play. I remember a sunset last week, too, of mere moments when the sky of thick snow-cloud broke, to let golden coral light come through from the cold light blue, making silver and shining the trees and land laden with ice and snow.

Other beauty I've seen and heard and remembered: the face of a friend, in laughter; the touch of a hand; the sound of triumphant music; the motion of horses, racing—the memories go on forever. Try your own, and see—if an impression of beauty is not somehow connected with a feeling, strong and deep. Sheer swift, sudden joy, unconsolable sorrow, or simply wonder. Admiration that something so beautiful could be.

It's that way with Michelangelo, for instance, when you meet him in his art. Wonder at his young David, or at the face of his Madonna, holding her Christ. It's that way with Sophocles and his chorus, saying of Oedipus, the King, in his shame: "Who

Sister Marie's paper is a redaction of a speech she gave January 11, 1973, for the opening of Fine Arts Week at Bishop Hogan High School in Kansas City, Missouri. She is now on leave from her position at Saint Mary College to complete a year as an NEH Fellow-in-Residence at the University of Chicago.

bears more weight of joy / Than mass of sunlight shifting images, / Or who shall make his thought stay on / That down time drifts away? / Your splendor is fallen."

It is the purpose of art, of fine art, to make the splendor of such words stay. We're more familiar, perhaps, with some of the words of Shakespeare, who had a lot to say about life and man and death and dreams. In one of his last plays, "The Tempest," it was as if Shakespeare had come to know man better than ever. He let Prospero throw away his magic on this forsaken island and send his subjects back to their kingdom, with the new knowledge that "We are such stuff as dreams are made on, / And our little life is rounded with a sleep."

Poets seem to know more, and deeper, than the rest of us. One of our American women poets, and not easy to understand—Emily Dickinson—wrote about her craft: "This was a Poet—It is That / Distills amazing sense / From ordinary Meanings— / . . . Of Pictures, the Discloser— / The Poet—it is He— / Entitles Us—by Contrast— / To ceaseless Poverty—"

That's the way these great artists make us feel: poor, and they offer riches, for our enjoyment. They have the Midas touch—that makes ordinary things pure gold. Not solid gold Cadillacs, not even silver-lined clouds, but the kind of gold that goes with us when we die, because it's life and truth and beauty. What Robert Frost said of life we can turn around, paraphrase, for art: "It is 'something gold' that *can* stay.' "

It has to do, I think, with what the Man from La Mancha was singing. An artist is always dreaming an impossible dream—to let something great that sits inside of him out, into a form, true and beautiful. Then he touches what is outside of himself—stone, canvas, marble, a keyboard, a bowstring, greasepaint—and behold! something new is born.

Have you ever seen a picture of that tremendous scene of Creation that Michelangelo painted on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome? Parts of it you do not easily forget. There's an image of God, reaching out one great strong finger, to Adam, reaching back: hand to hand, just a moment away from the touch of creation. Part of a myth? Of course. Our myths and music and images tell us the most important truths about ourselves.

Michelangelo knew, in his soul, the touch of God. Or he could never have created what he did: his Moses, his David, his Pieta. And we could never make the things we dream of: the paintings you've mounted in your art classes, the characters you're going to see give new life to this stage, the liturgy you're going to make together—unless some reality of life greater than ourselves touches us. To create something makes us, if ever so little, more like God.

Homer, poet of the *Iliad*—greatest protest against war ever written—and of the *Odyssey*, had a minstrel say, "My gift is song for men and for the gods undying. . . / No one taught me: deep in my mind a god / Shaped all the various ways of life in song."

Since Plato, men have known that the gods somehow sent their power into certain men to see and shape their visions into words and music and dance, and they feared that power, for it sparks passion, spreads ideas, inspires to action. In the cause of truth, and born of love, art is the most creative force there is; distorted, it destroys men.

Don't ever despoil beauty or let it be despoiled before you. To destroy is part of hatred, and hatred is always ultimately against ourselves. This festival of art calls you to grow in loving beautiful things, and is respecting those who make them.

Art, then, is essentially of man's and woman's making. A making that always is a re-making of what has delighted their eye, and their mind's eye. Man and woman are imitators—whether they play or work or paint. Nature is their model. But their nature impels them to improve her work.

Frank Lloyd Wright, the architect Americans are proud to claim, developed the school of thought that the design of a building should be in perfect harmony with the design of the land, should extend its shape, its beauty, its purposes. Beethoven's music—that all men of the West lay claim to—was sometimes a very echo of bird's song, waterfalls; it soars to the sun as mountains do, widens like the sky. And a dancer like Pavlova is a wonder in motion; she makes her body sing. Have you ever watched a dancer?

Some of them get onto the football field. The way these men—like Pruitt and Rodgers—managed their bodies in the bowl games: darting, twisting, reversing, as swift as snakes; leaping to pull the ball down out of the air; soaring, almost horizontal, over bodies heaped on the line. And the grace of a good punter is a joy—as any coach can tell you.

So what we are in nature we are in art. The things man makes when he is in touch with beauty make us stand silent and wondering. I have seen hundreds of students standing, squatting, leaning against stone pillars to listen for hours to an orchestra play a Mass by Beethoven in a London cathedral. I have seen students sitting before Michangelo's David, moving around to draw it from every angle. And I have seen the interior of St. Mark's cathedral in Venice come alive with the brilliant reds, blues, greens, and golds of mosaics covering walls, floors, ceilings as if there were not enough room in all Christendom for the glory that was in the men who conceived them.

When spirit and matter become one, art is born. When man's hands keep par with his heart, we catch sight of beauty. And it happens to the people you know.

Let me tell you a brief story. Mark—we'll call him Mark—was a young fellow just getting his Master's degree in art at the University of Wisconsin. This particular evening he had completed his exhibit and was inviting a group of us to come and see it. In the course of the conversation he had told us of his childhood, strongly Lutheran; of his curiosity about nuns and priests, and those throngs of boys and girls who poured in and out of the buildings down the street from his house; and of the way he had grown away from his parents of late. He could stay at home for vacations scarcely three days.

But things were better now: his mother and dad had come for his graduation and his art exhibit. He knew from their reaction that they had come to accept him, even if they didn't understand him, since he'd left home. He had overheard his mother say to his dad, pointing to one of his paintings, "How would that one look on the west wall of the living room?"

I went to see the exhibit. It was large. Mark had said the summer had been full of it. Sometimes he'd put in twelve to sixteen hours a day—because it was there, inside, waiting to get out. The ideas kept coming. And he'd loved the work.

Imagine my surprise, then, when I walked into the display room to see one after another—all the same, huge squares and rectangles of color; thick, layered oils of brush strokes, millions of strokes, blending and blooming in colors and shades of colors—purple predominantly in this one, green in that, another of blues and magentas and yellows.

Each had a name—each was a work of art—or he would not have exhibited it. Though the beauty of those colors and the distinctiveness of each piece grew as I gazed, it was all beyond me. But art is not made to be understood. There is that in art which cannot be explained because it does not yield explanations. But it's there, a way of "saying" what is seen.

In literature, we call it tone. Perhaps it is the most personal and therefore the most exciting, the most characteristic and the most elusive quality a work of art can have. It is its ultimate, unlockable mystery. It is the touch of man most like, perhaps, the touch of God.

So do not worry if you don't know what a particular work means. Who can say just what a Bergman film means? "Wild Strawberries," "The Seventh Seal," or Fellini's "*La Strada*"—what are the directors saying? Who do they mean? It does matter but the artist is not obliged to tell us. There's where our work begins—to meet him in his art, not for his meaning or statement or idea, but for the whole of his work; its touch of him or her, for the artist is the ultimate mystery of art.

Art makes like life and makes up life, lets out feeling, and looks into thoughts for all their worth. From delight to wonder to seeing a truth of things is not a long road—call it inspiration or simply what all of us have: imagination. But the work that follows, that gives external form to the idea, is incredible. Work that looks like play—when an amateur does it, but even there takes patience and skill and perserverance.

Imagine how much of that went into what a woodworking class made at a Minnesota high school this spring—their own airplane. A beauty!—and you should have seen, on the newscast, the looks on those boys' faces as they watched it take off. The whole school, and part of the town, was there to celebrate.

And I was reminded of an essay my freshmen read, by a poet who says that the human impulse of giving order and form to experience is to make a *whole* thing, to see the making through, start to finish. He adds that the impulse has been deeply frustrated by technological specialization. I though those boys achieved what no assembly line can—a human act.

Each work of art says something vital of its maker—"distills amazing sense" out of matter and "ordinary meanings." A philosopher from Notre Dame University told us, at the college a few months ago, that to get at the meaning of his reality a man makes an account of himself, tells his own story. Then, the next morning, in a class, he said the image he likes to use for himself, as philosopher, is that of a cabinet-maker. His father was that.

They don't exist in great numbers anymore. The German people have always been proud of them. My grandfather knew the trade. A cabinet-maker respects his work, and the wood. He loves to make the wood more beautiful, and everything he makes is useful. That is his particular art: to bring nature and beauty and use together. We often forget their union, deluged with plastics as we are.

But behind his cabinet and the care it took—Adam Bede took such care, remember?—is the maker, who puts his touch, his mark on matter to make what we call civilization.

Always the philosophers have asked, "What is man?" And we know the psalmist answered: "a little less than the angels." But we can say now—"a little more, too." For

man can make. And in making, in touch with nature and beauty, with himself and his fellowman, even with God, man re-creates himself.

The most human—and, for all we know, the most divine—aspect of our making is the joy it gives us. When we create something we enjoy ourselves, most literally. We enjoy making homes and gardens, market-places and airplanes, stories and friendships. Even when they cost us dear.

The runner, the player tells us something: the athlete makes his game—to win. That's life. And he learns, in the making, how to lose. That's life. Most of all, he works at it. And that's life.

That, in the end, is what art does—reveal life. It shows us "things as they are," shows us ourselves. What we make well humanizes us, liberates us, transcends us. There is nothing we cannot make—except ourselves. Unless in that greatest of all acts of making, when for and with another a man and a woman recreate even themselves. In a real way too friends re-create one another; and children create realities of their own, outstripping older less pliable imaginations.

So in art we take part in the work and play—the creation—of God. And when we come to appreciate art, the work of our fellowmen, those far away in time and place and those next to us, we do another work: we encourage the artist and we ourselves make yet one more beautiful thing: the joy of another.

Treasure then the things you make. Treasure the things men and women make. Treasure the wonder that you are.

From A Reading Desk

Common Sense and Testing in English
National Council of Teachers of English

MARCIA E. SMITH
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It has long been known that students of English are evaluated on a wide range of material. Besides the basic skills which make up the study, there are attitudes and values that a teacher must measure. Testing of the English curriculum then becomes a highly complex process. As time has passed, administrators and teachers have relied more and more on some form of standardized test to measure the results of teaching. Due to the dependence on the results of such a test, it has become necessary to define the limits of standardized tests and inform the public of the variety of types available. In the summer of 1974, a Task Force was called by the National Council of Teachers of English to do just that. The efforts of that Task Force were directed at revealing to educators and to the public the harm committed by unwarranted faith in standardized tests. The booklet which resulted is a summary of those efforts.

The opening section deals with the specific areas of learning of English. With the aid of a diagram, the authors have broken down the curriculum into sixteen areas that are emphasized. These vary from grammar and language facts to listening and speaking skills. From the list of skills it is apparent that only a small percentage of that which is taught is actually tested. There is simply no way that certain facets of study can be tested. A standardized test, one which tests all students with a certain number of questions under the same conditions, will focus on an even smaller part of learning than regular tests.

After explaining the limited areas which are tested, the booklet determines the reasons for those shortcomings. The authors have conducted a thorough study of tests to make that charge. Their reasons for stating those faults seem highly believable. At this point, they have moved on to the uses and misuses of information gained from testing.

It is understood that students and their parents, teachers and administrators, communities and the general public all have a natural interest in testing results. Different individuals want to know that students are mastering and sustaining the information which is taught. Beyond legitimate uses of test information, however, is a broad area of misuse. The authors feel that often the wrong kind of information is acquired, or the correct information used in the wrong way. At times, testing information can, and is used, to put students in certain classes, evaluate a new curriculum, or even to assess an entire school system. The authors point out that this can occur for many different reasons, among these a desire to generalize from the results.

The next section of the booklet deals with the methods that teachers of English use to evaluate students. The first way of determining progress is by tests that are made by teachers or departments. It is quickly stated, though, that that is only one of the methods that should be used. Students can also be evaluated through graded papers, files of their work, rating scales, and other methods. It is stressed that each way is well worth using. The authors feel that in spite of other means, standardized tests are

dominant as a measuring tool. The information presented states that teachers and administrators should provide effective alternatives to this type of measurement. Once again, a reference is made to other means of evaluation.

The report also contains a compact guide to the most common types of standardized tests. The first of three mentioned are norm-referenced tests. It is explained that this test involves reporting a student's score in comparison with other students. Faults of norm-referenced material are thoroughly explored, the main problem being the cultural differences between compared groups of students. Once again, teachers should be aware of shortcomings and make these limitations known when these tests are used.

Criterion-referenced and domain-referenced tests are the other common forms of standardized tests. Criterion-referenced tests, which begin with an objective that students are to reach, are effective as a measure of progress toward a specific goal. Because these tests are limited to specific material, standardized forms often miss the objectives set up by classes. Domain-referenced tests measure success within a particular field of activity. Should the material given in the test not have been taught, the results of the test will show only that the students did not learn what they were not taught.

At this point, the matter of the selection of a valid standardized test has not been presented. The final selections of the booklet deal with the choosing and interpretation of those tests. A set of guidelines is set up to determine that effective tests will be used. These guidelines range from clearly worded questions to the posing of meaningful tasks and directions. The authors have set up rigorous guides for the test manuals also. Among other criteria are reports on test validity, information of reliability, and guidelines for a standard error of measurement. With the above mentioned considerations taken, the tests should yield greater accuracy of measurement.

The interpretation of tests should remain true to the purposes of the test. The booklet reminds the user of such tests that they are only a measure of a sample of learning. They should never be the only basis for decision-making. It is important to remember that as limited tests, standardized tests are only limited judges of student progress. The authors advocate that teachers make public the error in dependence on these scores as a measurement of total ability in English.

Two helpful guides follow the main body on testing. The first of these is a checklist for evaluating tests and test uses. This is composed of a set of questions for educators concerning content, format, accompanying manuals, and result reports for any given standardized test.

The last short guide is condensed information about tests of English for citizens. It discusses the limitations and legitimate uses which can be made regarding tests. Also included is a set of questions that parents might ask schools concerning the use of published tests. This entire section for parents could be very easily reproduced and given out to those concerned.

Without a doubt, the booklet has much to offer regarding testing. It has carefully managed to produce data which solidly supports the overall charges against standardized tests. Not only have the criticisms been given, but the authors have sought and proposed workable alternatives. Throughout the booklet, terms are explained in footnote definitions eliminating any ambiguity of meanings. For those who must continually struggle with the forms of testing, the text is an education.

Parents, if not familiar with the booklet itself, should be given the opportunity to survey the information. It is the hope of the authors that the booklet will alleviate some of the ignorance about testing. In that endeavor, the manual is a success.

I AM NOT OEDIPUS

I had read *Oedipus the King*
was glad that I was not a king
and felt more at home
in my world then he in his,
glad that it was, after all,
only a play and that the yard
had kept its green grass,
the temperature around 72
and the flaming red of the October maple
breath taking. "It will stay,"
I thought, "as it is now, beautiful,
calm, the leaves barely stirring.
Not being a tragic king I will
face no winter, no raging storms
or even take that lonely journey
into myself to discover life's dark corners,
never open long-closed doors or go
exiled into the bitter dark of the blind.
I will only go inside
to answer the telephone.

Elmer F. Suderman

20,000 WORDS A DAY

If I talk twenty five words a minute
(I'm sure I do)
that's fifteen hundred words an hour.
If I talk twelve hours a day
(I must listen some of the time)
that's eighteen thousand words a day,
a conservative figure,
say rather twenty thousand words a day:
At night comes the nagging question:
Have I said anything?

Elmer F. Suderman
Gustavus Adolphus College

The English Teacher As Concerned Citizen

MELVIN RIGGS, Secretary, and OSCAR M. HAUGH, NCTE Liaison Officer, Kansas Association of Teachers of English

Traditionally, many teachers of English have not been deeply concerned with citizenship activities because they have often looked to the teacher of social studies for such leadership. A departure from this stance was taken by the Kansas Association of Teachers of English at its annual meeting in Topeka, March 7, 1975. Two bills had been introduced into the state of Kansas House of Representatives and one in the Kansas Senate which related directly to what should be taught in the public schools and how the work of the teacher would be evaluated.

Accordingly, as concerned citizens, the Executive Committee of K.A.T.E. discussed these bills in their annual meeting on March 6 and prepared two resolutions which were presented to all members attending the annual meeting the following day, March 7. At this meeting the resolutions were passed without a dissenting vote and a motion was made to send copies of these resolutions to Governor Bennett, Senator Harder, Chairman of the Education Committee in the Senate, and Representative Crumbaker, Chairman of the Education Committee in the House of Representatives.

The purpose of this report is to provide members of K.A.T.E. with a detailed accounting of the events, which followed in chronological order. The reasons for this presentation are two-fold: first, to provide members with all the details related to this matter; second, to show that English teachers are and should be concerned citizens who express to their elected public officials their wishes about legislation which may have deleterious effects upon their work as teachers of the youth of Kansas.

First the three bills will be presented; next, the two resolutions which were sent to the legislative leaders named above; third, their first replies; and last, two recent letters which indicate the present status of these three pieces of legislation.

House Bill No. 2284
By Representative Kearns

AN ACT relating to education; requiring high school instruction in the free enterprise system.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:

Section 1. Commencing with the 1976-77 school year, all accredited high schools, public, private or parochial, shall provide and give a course of instruction concerning the essentials and benefits of the free enterprise system; and no student shall be graduated from such school who has not taken and satisfactorily passed such course. The state board of education shall be responsible for prescribing suitable teaching material for such course of instruction.

As used in this section "free enterprise" means an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of capital goods, by investments that are determined by private decision rather than by state control, and by prices, production, and the distribution of goods that are determined in a free manner.

Melvin Riggs is a teacher of English at Chaparral High School, Anthony, Kansas; Oscar Haugh is Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Kansas, Lawrence.

Section 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its publication in the statute book.

House Bill No. 2334
By Representatives Jones and Moore

AN ACT concerning education; requiring instruction in Kansas history at certain grade levels.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:

Section 1. All accredited schools, public, private or parochial, offering any of grades seven (7) to twelve (12), shall provide and give a course of instruction in Kansas history at any of the levels of grade seven or above; and no student shall be graduated from such school who has not taken and satisfactorily passed such course. The state board of education shall be responsible for prescribing suitable teaching material for such course of instruction.

Section 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its publication in the statute book.

Senate Bill No. 406
By Senator Saar

AN ACT providing for a general examination to be given to all high school students as a requirement for graduation; amending K. S. A. 72-116, and repealing the existing section.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:

New Section 1. The state board of education is authorized and directed to adopt or develop a general examination covering all courses of instruction required for graduation from accredited public, private or parochial high schools. Such examination shall be given annually to every student who has completed, or is about to complete, requirements for graduation from an accredited Kansas high school, whether public, private or parochial. No student shall be graduated from any such school without having passed the examination herein provided for.

New Section 2. The state board of education shall adopt rules and regulations for the administration of this act in accordance with article 4 of chapter 77 of the Kansas Statutes Annotated, and amendments thereto.

Section 3. K. S. A. 72-116 is hereby amended to read as follows: 72-116. Any person who shall complete a four-year course of study in any high school accredited by the state board of education *and pass the general examination provided for in section 1 of this act* shall be entitled to admission to the freshman class of any university of college under the supervision of the state board of regents, on presenting a statement containing a transcript of his high school record signed by the principal of the school or superintendent of the school district certifying that such person has satisfactorily completed the course requirements *and general examination* of the state board of education necessary for graduation from high school.

Section 4. K.S.A. 72-116 is hereby repealed.

Section 5. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its publication in the statute book.

A RESOLUTION
OF THE
KANSAS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH
CONCERNING HOUSE BILLS 2284 and 2334, MARCH 7, 1975

WHEREAS, as in some previous legislative sessions, bills have been introduced in the Kansas legislature that would require by law that certain courses be offered by Kansas high schools and completed by students for high-school graduation. WHEREAS such proposed legislation has usually been prompted by either an example set by a few other states for their own reasons or by a personal interest of the sponsoring legislator; WHEREAS those states in which the legislatures have undertaken curriculum control have experienced considerable additional difficulty in their schools because of it; and WHEREAS traditionally Kansas has maintained a certain enviable freedom in education by keeping educational decisions and responsibility of the local districts and the state education agency, both controlled by elected boards of education, where regulations have the force of law but can be adjusted as issues present themselves; be it therefore

RESOLVED that the Kansas Association of Teachers of English supports the right delegated by law to the local districts and the state education agency to determine what shall be taught and what shall be required of students for graduation from Kansas schools, beyond the basic learnings required by the Kansas Constitution.

A RESOLUTION OF THE
KANSAS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH
CONCERNING SENATE BILL NO. 406, March 7, 1975

WHEREAS, in the wave of renewed public condemnation of the schools following the announcement that student scores on certain standardized achievement tests are showing a drop, that certain institutions of higher learning are placing an increasing number of incoming students in pre-freshman level English courses, that many business employers are complaining of deplorable English language deficiencies in prospective employees, and that there is a burgeoning interest in "back to basics" alternative schools, a bill has been introduced in the Kansas Legislature to require state-wide testing and to make a satisfactory score on the tests a necessary prerequisite for graduation from high school; WHEREAS, although undoubtedly intended to upgrade achievement in the schools, such a procedure would in reality control the curriculum by causing teachers and students to direct their efforts toward the tests; WHEREAS such a state-wide testing program could easily become an accountability measure to be used as a weapon against teachers; WHEREAS such tests would of necessity be built on measurable cognitive learnings and might be heavily weighted toward college preparation, which migh put le,s academically inclined students at a disadvantage and might bring about omission of valuable but less measurable learnings from the educational experience; WHEREAS the proposal of such a state-wide testing program does not appear to take into account the complexities of the learning process particularly the adverse influences on the young in our society; be it therefore

RESOLVED that the Kansas Association of Teachers of English opposes the passage and/or implementation of any requirement, legislative or otherwise, for state-wide testing as either a practice or a condition for graduation from a Kansas school; and be it further RESOLVED that K.A.T.E. favors continued efforts to improve language learning and to develop more valid measures for evaluating language competence.

A Letter from Governor Robert F. Bennett, dated March 25, 1975

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of March 19 with the enclosed resolutions. Rest assured that I am totally in agreement with your concept that the legislature should not dictate the curriculum of Kansas schools beyond basic learning requirements. Over the years I have assiduously opposed such proposals.

While in many instances bills that are introduced are directed to honest desires on the part of the legislature to see that a broader training is offered, I have always been considerably concerned about the possibility that such proposals could be expanded to the point where government in effect controls the right to know. Thanks so much for sharing your views with me.

A Letter from Senator Joseph C. Harder, dated March 25, 1975

This is to advise you that Senate Bill 406 was tabled in the Senate Education Committee. The Committee members felt that we did not have enough information to make an intelligent decision regarding testing of students. However, I am certain that this matter will be studied by an interim committee at which time I am hopeful we will receive some input from your association.

I appreciate hearing from you.

A Letter from Representative Don E. Crumbaker, dated March 24, 1975

Thank you for your letter, and the resolutions passed by the Kansas Association of Teachers of English. We have had two bills regarding mandatory curriculum introduced into our committee this year. One had to do with the mandatory teaching of Kansas History, and the other with teaching of the free enterprise system. The Kansas History bill passed out of the committee, but was defeated on the floor of the House after considerable debate.

We have always contended, and evidently the majority of the House members agree, that we should not legislate curriculum, which goes along with the resolution your organization passed. I appreciate your writing and giving me your organization's viewpoint.

A Letter from Senator Harder, dated September 10, in answer to a follow-up inquiry of August 25

In reply to your letter of August 25, the Senate Education Committee did table Senate Bill 406. When the bill was tabled the committee did recommend that it be studied during the interim, however, the Coordinating Council elected not to include it. This does not preclude the Senate Education Committee from studying this matter.

I might add that one of the reasons the bill was tabled was that the committee did not feel it had sufficient information to make an intelligent decision. Any information you could supply me either pro or con would be helpful.

A Leiter from Representative Crumbaker, dated September 21, in answer to follow-up inquiry of August 25

This is in response to your letter of August 25 inquiring about House bills 2284 and 2334 which were introduced in the 1975 session of the Legislature. House Bill 2334 by Representatives Jones and Moore would have required instruction of Kansas History and a course in Kansas History before a student could graduate from high school. The Committee passed this bill, and after considerable debate, it was rather soundly defeated on the floor of the House. This is an indication to me that the Legislature, and particularly the House of Representatives, in its present makeup, does not want to delve in passing statutes that would require the teaching of certain courses in the schools of our state.

We held over House Bill 2284 by Representative Kearns which was a bill to require high school instruction in the free enterprise system. There was considerble sentiment for this kind of teaching in the schools, but here again, unless there is a completely different makeup or a change of attitude in the House, this bill does not have much chance of getting out of the Committee, and if it does get out of the Committee, in my estimation it would have very little chance of passing on the floor of the House. When we convene next January, I will bring this up before the Committee, and of course if they feel that it has no chance, they may just not take any action, or they might kill it. If they pass it, then of course it would go for debate before the entire body of the House of Representatives.

The foregoing letters are self-explanatory, but one final word should be added. Many members of K.A.T.E. were not in attendance at the meeting when the resolutions were passed and some may disagree with the action taken. However, the intent of this article has been to provide the kind of communication that should pass between an organization of English teachers and its members. Those who agree with the action taken may follow the "silence means consent" pattern, although opinions from the members are always welcome. Those who disagree must make their wishes known so that K.A.T.E. may more effectively represent all of its membership.

From The State Specialist's Desk

LOIS CAFFYN
State Department of Education

Whether or not the teachers of English language arts have undertaken to analyze the situation, they occupy a highly visible and less than enviable position at or near the bull's eye of the school target board. The darts that come from several directions are no mere suction-cup toys. They can draw blood.

The abandon with which school critics throw themselves into their work tempts one to indulge — briefly, of course — in the negative process of enumerating some of the reasons why teachers of English do not succeed so well as they would like. After all, this has been an accepted self-defense mechanism in the faculty lounge for a long time.

From the business and professional world comes the demand that students be taught to spell and punctuate correctly and to read accurately — bone and sinew of the back-to-basics movement. From many parents comes the expectation that students be given a thorough grounding in traditional grammar and in the "classics" — what the parents themselves studied in school. Some strongly religious or conservative communities insist that the students be taught moral values as a first priority, while others request basic reading and writing skills with absolutely no consideration given to social, moral, or otherwise controversial matters.

In the interest of self-preservation, textbook editors and publishers, burned by the loss of many state-wide adoption requirements, by the accompanying trend toward multi-source teaching, and by the general public adaptation to the constant splatter of blood-'n'-guts, disillusionment, and near-pornography from the world of entertainment and mass media, have offered the schools similar materials "relevantly" loaded with unresolved problems and nonconventional language and mechanics. Law-makers, funders, vested interest groups, and other self-appointed trend-setters support teaching/learning activities organized around interdisciplinary approaches, thinking skills, career awareness, or controversial themes and issues, all relevant because they appear to be more applicable to the real world than academic learnings. Some voices from higher education request student ability to organize, explicate, and document expository presentation — teaching pedestrian utilitarian literacy is the responsibility of business, not of the schools. Others insist on eliminating physical and mental structure and on placing the chairs in a circle.

Social manipulators would like to require that learnings be measurable so that students can be categorized and teaching can be justified on a scale of financial return. The humanities groups at the federal level are pushing for the teaching of all disciplines through the vehicle of the arts, and there are always those school administrators who establish by edict whatever is termed "innovative," but they evaluate everything by the traditional standardized tests. Some agencies interested in screening for college entrance seek to inject testing, course guidelines, and even college teachers into high schools to prepare the "academically able" as they wish to have them prepared. The largest amounts of public funds are going to vocational education and to the physically, mentally, culturally, and financially handicapped.

Each of these requests and influences — and there are others — is restricted to the scope of the limited view that prompted it. In a sense, each approach fits into the

definition of a work of art: planned distortion. Distortion it is, but planned it may not be, in that those who propose each idea either are not aware of the validity of other dimensions or do not choose to acknowledge them. None shows sufficient balance to stand alone.

The time has passed, if it ever existed, when teachers of English language arts could afford to adopt or even adapt any program because it is an innovation, or a trend, or a special interest of a teacher or an administrator. The time has long passed when a teacher and students could rock along through an established program or textbook comfortably covering the material, reading literary criticism, or simply expressing themselves without the discipline of organizing thought and form, when much of the vocal public is screaming for utilitarian literacy.

Dr. Stephen Dunning, president of the National Council of Teachers of English, suggests in his "Equal Time--" editorial in the September, 1975, issue of the *English Journal* that English language arts teachers have failed to make students literate because they have not tried very hard and because they really do not know how, very well. One might add that they have not tried very hard partly because many of them have not really believed that teaching literacy was their responsibility. If the primary teachers did not get it done, nobody did. In fact, language arts teachers as a profession have never quite decided what the first responsibilities of their discipline are. Judging from goals and objectives written in schools, one concludes that many have thought about what they, the teachers and schools, should do, offer, develop, introduce, prepare, encourage, or instill but have almost never thought about what the students should be able to do with language as evidence of their learning.

Indulgence accomplished, it is appropriate to turn attention to more constructive considerations. The teachers of English language arts have alternatives from which to choose. They can continue to remain silent. They can flit from one innovation to another. Or they can take a few deep breaths and begin with affirmative basics. This is not "back to basics." For most teachers it is basics for the first time.

First, the American public school — an organized system and center for learning, peopled with those desiring to learn and staffed with those qualified to teach — like other institutions such as the church and the home, needs to identify and formulate its unique mission in society, unique in that no other institution or agency does or can perform the mission well. It needs then to give that unique function first priority. A statement of its unique function may presuppose a number of supportive functions necessary to carry out its first responsibility at its highest level of effectiveness, but those must always be kept in a supportive role.

Second, teachers of the language arts from kindergarten through grade twelve need to formulate together the unique responsibility of their K-12 department. They need to work out together what they hope students will be able to do with their native language in all its forms by the time they have completed the K-12 program. Regardless of excuses offered for escaping from this "committee of the whole," there is absolutely no substitute for this K-12 experience with its satisfactions and product. Many administrative and traditional influences tend to perpetuate the division between elementary and secondary schools, but they are indefensible where learning is concerned. More than one hundred years is long enough for elementary and secondary teachers to refrain from talking with one another.

Third, teachers need to give student learning first priority and give teaching the supporting role. They need to state the desired outcomes of their K-12 program in terms of desirable competencies for students. Formulating statements of desired competencies for blocks of grades or grade levels as part of the end-of-grade-level competencies is a follow-up phase of curriculum planning. Statements of what the school and the teacher will provide and of what tasks the student will be required to perform during the learning experience are important because they outline the work for both teachers and students and state the only things for which the school and teachers can be held accountable. The statements of desired terminal outcomes in terms of observable student behaviors as evidence of learning are, however, the reason, the justification, for all the others. If carefully stated as observable — not measurable — evidences of learning towards which the teachers and students strive, they are strictly behavorial objectives and cannot be used for teacher accountability without changes. The selection of all teaching/learning materials, then, becomes a matter of finding materials and activities to serve these ends.

These three basics, when brought to open-ended completion and made available to interested persons of the school and community, would give the teachers more power to improve the teaching/learning process and to respond confidently to questions and criticism than they have ever had before — a dart-proof vest.